

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please delete the first full paragraph corresponding to “Cross-Reference to the Related Applications,” and replace the corresponding paragraph on page 1 of the specification:

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This patent application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Utility Patent Application Serial No. 09/892,593, filed in the USPTO on June 27, 2001 by Ferguson et al., which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Utility Patent Application Serial No. 09/433,449, filed November 4, 1999, U.S. Utility Patent Application Serial No. 09/434,036, filed November 4, 1999, and U.S. Utility Patent Application Serial No. 09/619,190, filed July 19, 2000, which claims benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/254,506 filed in the USPTO on December 8, 2000 by Thorne et al., U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/275,810, filed on March 14, 2001, U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/275,886, filed March 14, 2001 and U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/296,968 filed in the USPTO on June 8, 2001 by Barrus et al., the entire contents of each of these applications being hereby incorporated by reference herein.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 33 and 38 as follows:

1. (Amended) A safety shield apparatus comprising:

a needle having a distal portion and a proximal portion; and

a shield including at least one elongated part, the shield having a proximal end mounted with the proximal portion of the needle and a distal end mounted with a planar contact surface, the planar contact surface including a needle linear bearing that slidably facilitates movement of the needle relative to the shield, the shield being extensible between a retracted position and an extended position via fixed positioning of the planar contact surface relative to movement of the shield.